

Message Text

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42 "

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 119911

P R 281254Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9004
INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 7395

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, EINV, PINR, AO, US

SUBJ: FLEC FINANCE SECRETARY ON CABINDA

REF: LISBON A244, SEPT 10, 1976 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN AN OCT 26 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS, CABINDA
LIBERATION FRONT (FLEC) FINANCE SECRETARY JOAO SERRANO:
-- ALLEGED THAT FLEC MILITARY SUCCESES HAD GIVEN FLEC CONTROL
OF TWO-THIRDS OF CABINDA;
-- STATED THAT CUBAN OPPONENTS WERE TAKING HEAVY LOSSES AND
HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A MINIMUM GOAL STRATEGY;
-- REITERATED FLEC APPEAL FOR US SUPPORT; AND
-- THREATENED THAT FLEC MIGHT HAVE TO DESTROY GULF OIL'S CABINDA
INSTALLATION UNLESS SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED. END SUMMARY

1. FLEC FINANCE SECRETARY: CARLOS LUIS PUNA, THE
LISBON REPRESENTATIVE OF CABINDA ENCLAVE LIBERATION
FRON (FLEC), VISITED EMBASSY ON OCT 22.
HE WANTED TO SCHEDULE A MEETING BETWEEN EMBOFFS AND FLEC
FINANCE SECRETARY JOAO SERRANO FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECTIFYING
USG UNDERSTANDING OF CABINDAN SITUATION. PUNA SAID
THAT HE NOW REALIZED, AFTER DISCUSSIONS OF CABINDAN
DEVELOPMENTS WITH SECRETARY SERRANO HTAT THE INFORMATION
WHICH HE HAD PASSED ON TO THE EMBASSY IN GOOD FAITH HAD BEEN
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FRAGMENTARY AND, IIN ITSELF, MISLEADING (REFAIR). HE

ATTRIBUTED THIS TO THE DISTORTED INFORMATION HE WAS BEING
FED BY THE RENEGADE, AND NOW PURGED, MOLICA FACTION.

2. SERRANO ON CABINDAN WAR: IN AN OCT 26 MEETING WITH
EMBOFFS, SECRETARY SERRANO DEPICTED THE CABINDAN WAR AS A
SHARP, FLUID, AND INCREASINGLY BRUTAL GUERRILLA STRUGGLE IN
WHICH AGGRESSIVE FLEC FORCES USING THE FRIENDLY POPULACE
AND TERRAIN ARE SUCCESSFULLY GRINDING AWAY AT THE
MECHANIZED AND AIR-SUPPORTED CUBAN ENEMY. THE CUBAN FORCES,
HE STATED, HAVE REACHED A LEVEL OF 9,000 MEN AND DO VIRTUALLY
ALL THE FIGHTING. THE 1,000 FAPLA TROOPS IN CABINDA ARE
LITTLE MORE THAN UNRELIABLE GARRISON TROOPS.
CUBAN AIR SUPPORT OF GROUND OPERATIONS IS NOW COMMONPLACE
AND GOOD ENOUGH TO BE WOORISOME. BUT DESPITE THESE OBSTACLES,
ASSERTED SERRANO, FLEC HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE MILITARY
GAINS AND NOW HOLDS THE UPPER HAND. IT HAS UNCONTESTED
CONTROL OF TWO-THIRDS OF CABINDAN TERRITORY AND STRIKES
AT WILL OVER MUCH OF THE REST. CUBAN STRATEGY HAS NOW
SHIFTED TO THE MINIMAL GOAL OF HOLDING ON TO AND PROTECTING
THE COASTAL OIL-PRODUCING REGION -- AN ENCLAVE EMBRACING
LITTLE MORE THAN THE GULF FACILITIES AND THE CITIES OF
CABINDA AND LANDANA -- AND THE ROAD LINK TO CONGO-
BRAZZAVILLE. FLEC, HOWEVER, HAS CUT TRAFFIC ON THIS ROAD
ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS.

3. CRITICAL PHASE: THE CABINDAN SITUATION, STATED SERRANO,
HAS REACHED A CRITICAL PHASE IN THAT FLEC IS NOT ONLY IN A
POSITION TO MOUNT A DECISIVE ATTACK ON THE KEY CABINDA CITY
STRONGHOLD, BUT MUST LAUNCH THIS ATTACK. THE ATTACK HAS TO COIN-
CIDE WITH THE EXPECTED POWER STRUGGLE IN THE MPLA LEADERSHIP
BETWEEN THE NETO MODERATES, SUPPORTED BY THE CUBANS, AND
THE NITO ALVES HARDLINERS, AS WELL AS WITH A PLANNED FNLA-UNITA
OFFENSIVE IN ANGOLA. BOTH THESE EVENTS WILL PROBABLY
OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS. IN ADDITION, SERRANO
HEAVILY STRESSED LOGISTICAL AND HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS
PROLONGED WARFARE CAN ONLY INCREASE THE SUFFERING OF THE FLEC
TROOPS, WHO ARE FIGHTING DESPITE A CRITICAL LACK OF WEAPONS,
MEDICINE, CLOTHING, FOOD, AND MONEY AND THE CABINDAN
POPULATION, THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES IN ZAIRE
BORDER CAMPS OR BACKWOODS SAFEHAVENS ARE
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ALSO FACING CUBAN REPRISALS AND A DESPERATE LACK OF
ESSENTIALS. HOWEVER, FLEC IS NOT AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO
MOUNT THE NEEDED OFFENSIVE GIVEN ITS CURRENT LACK OF
SUPPLIES, ESPECIALLY WEAPONS.

4. APPEAL FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE: SERRANO, LIKE PUNA IN
PREVIOUS TIMES, APPEALED FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE. HE CLAIMED FLEC
DIPLOMACY WAS SCORING SUCCESSES. ZAIRE, GABON, AND FRANCE

WERE NOW FIRMLY COMMITTED, BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH. THE FIRST DIRECT FRENCH MATERIAL SUPPORT TO FLEC WAS AIRLIFTED INTO FLEC TERRITORY ON SEPT 3 OR 4, ACCORDING TO SERRANO. FLEC NEEDS THE HEAVY WEAPONRY REQUIRED TO MOUNT AN ASSAULT AGAINST CABINDA CITY IN THE FACE OF HEAVY CUBAN FIREPOWER. SS AND SAM MISSILES WOULD BE ESPECIALLY WELCOME. IF WEAPONRY CANNOT BE PROVIDED DUE TO CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION, ANYTHING WILL DO -- MEDICINE, UNIFORMS, FOOD, OR MONEY. FLEC IS NOT ASKING FOR A HANDOUT, IT HAS THE CAPABILITY AND THE WILLINGNESS TO REPAY ALL DEBTS AFTER FINAL VICTORY. NOR IS FLEC ASKING THAT THE U.S. EMBARRASS ITSELF BY OPEN INVOLVEMENT; GABON, ZAIRE, OR ISRAEL COULD SERVE AS CHANNELS FOR USG ASSISTANCE.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 281254Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9005
INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LISBON 7395

EXDIS

5. THREATS: SERRANO AND PUNA BASED THEIR APPEAL LARGELY ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS, I.E. COMMON DEMOCRATIC, ANTI-COMMUNIST IDEALS. HOWEVER, THEY CAPPED THEIR ARGUMENT BY FLATLY STATING THAT UNLESS THE USG PROVIDED SOME ASSISTANCE TO FLEC, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, FLEC WOULD BE CONSTRAINED TO ATTACK THE GULF OIL INSTALLATIONS IN CABINDA. SERRANO NOTED THAT UP TO THE PRESENT FLEC HAD SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED DAMAGNG THESE INSTALLATIONS "BECAUSE OF EXPECTED U.S. ASSISTANCE." HE SAID THAT THE SABOTAGE OF A PIPELINE ON SEPT. 16 HAD BEEN THE WORK OF AN ISOLATED TEN-MAN PATROL. ITS LEADER WAS PUNISHED AND STRICT ORDERS WERE ISSUED PROHIBITING THE REPETITION

OF SUCH AN ACTION. BUT, HE STATED, LOGIC ARGUES AGAINST THE CONTINUED PROTECTION OF THE ENEMY'S PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF WEATH WITHOUT COUNTERVAILING COMPENSATION TO FLEC. HE GAVE NO TIME FRAME FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE.

6. REQUEST FOR U.N. DOCUMENT: SERRANO AND PUNA REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN SECURING A COPY OF AN APPEAL FOR CABINDAN INDEPENDENCE PRESENTED TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN 1958 OR 1959 BY CABINDAN NATIONALISTS ANDRE MINGAS AND ANTONIO PEDRO BENGE. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE DOCUMENT HAD BEEN FAVORABLY CONSIDERED AND THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD SUPPORT FLEC DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS. EMBOFFS STATED THAT EMBASSY WOULD PASS ON REQUEST TO WASHINGTON.
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7. EMBASSY STANCE: UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO HANDLE ALL CONTACTS WITH FLEC LEADERSHIP AT LOW LEVEL.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE ADVISE ON RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE AND UN APPEAL.
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